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ABSTRACT

Children can often be heard asking what they can do to help wildlife and the environment. Listed in this pamphlet are materials on these topics and suggestions for projects that children can do. Topics addressed in this guide include: (1) "Giving Habitat a Hand"; (2) "Saving a Place for Wildlife"; (3) "Injured or Abandoned Wild Animals"; (4) "Endangered Species"; (5) "Your Right to Write"; (6) "Air Pollution"; (7) "Saving Energy"; (8) "Water Pollution"; (9) "Saving Water"; and (10) "Trashy Problems." In addition, a section on how to find more information on several environmental topics from local and state resources is included. (CW)

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YOU CAN DO IT!

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EARTH DAY • EVERY DAY™

Earth Day—it's a special day for everyone to celebrate life on Earth and to find out how each of us can help our environment. The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970. The celebrations held that day told people all around the country: "We have only one Earth, and we'd better start taking care of it."

Since that first Earth Day, many laws have been passed to help wildlife and to clean up our environment. But a lot of problems haven't been solved, and some have grown even bigger. Now people all over the world need to pitch in and help.

What can just one person do? You can pick up litter, conserve water and energy, and recycle cans and bottles. You can write letters to Congress and build shelters for wildlife. By doing these and dozens of other things, you'll help the environment in a big way.

Imagine what a better place Earth would be if *everyone* made Earth Day *every day!*

"What can I do to help wildlife and the environment?"

We hear this question from kids all the time. Our answer is, "You can do a lot!" And these pages are full of tips to get you started.

We've listed lots of handouts you can send for—most of them free. If you see *Dept. FB* and the letters *NWF*, that means you can order the item from the National Wildlife Federation. NWF's address is on page 14.

We think you'll be surprised at all the ways *you* can help! Thanks for caring about our world.

YOU CAN DO IT!

2 Helping Wildlife

GIVING HABITAT A HAND 2

SAVING A PLACE FOR WILDLIFE 4

INJURED OR ABANDONED WILD ANIMALS 6

ENDANGERED SPECIES 7

YOUR RIGHT TO WRITE 7

8 Cleaning Up The World

AIR POLLUTION 8

SAVING ENERGY 9

WATER POLLUTION 10

SAVING WATER 11

TRASHY PROBLEMS 12

14 Finding More Information

Helping Wildlife

GIVING HABITAT A HAND

All wildlife needs *habitat*—a place to find food, water, shelter, and areas to raise young. But there's less and less habitat these days, so you can help animals by creating it. These projects are good for yards, school grounds, places of business, parks, and vacant lots. But be sure you get permission before you go to work. And ask your family, friends, club, and/or school to help!

▶ Build and take care of bird feeders. To find out how to recycle containers into bird feeders, write to "Recycle for the Birds," Dept. FB, NWF.

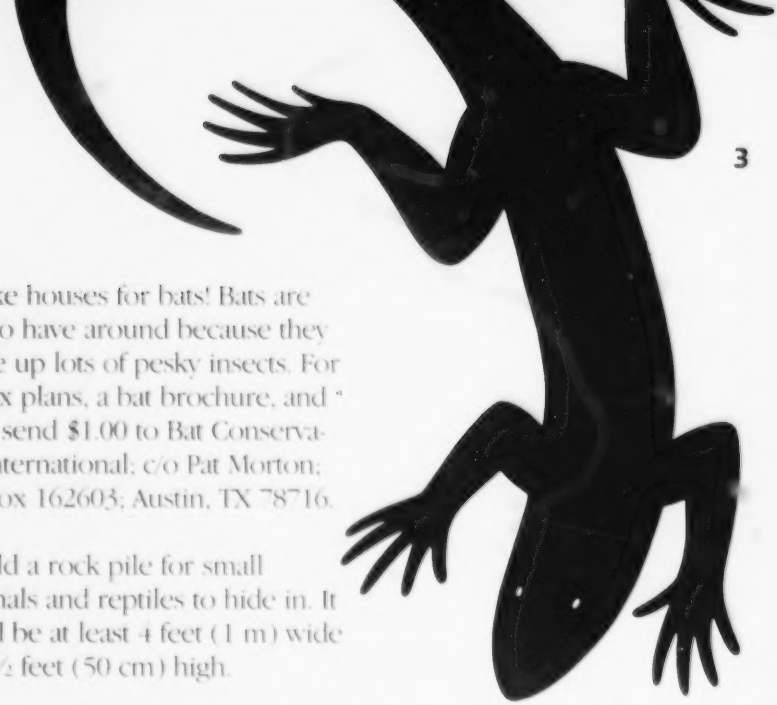
▶ Attract hummingbirds with "nectar" feeders or flowers they like. For a list of these plants and lots of hummingbird facts, write to "Calling All Hummers," Dept. FB, NWF.

▶ Provide water for wildlife. Plans for a drip pool are in *Ranger Rick* magazine, September 1988, page 47.

▶ Build nesting boxes for birds. Bluebird and barn owl box plans are available from Dept. FB, NWF.

▶ Provide nesting material for birds. Collect pieces of yarn or string, pet and human hair, or dryer lint in a net bag (the kind onions sometimes come in). Hang the bag outside in the spring.

▶ Plant a "butterfly garden." You'll get a double treat: beautiful flowers *and* beautiful butterflies. For a list of plants that butterflies like, see *Ranger Rick*, April 1987, page 31.



3

▶ Make houses for bats! Bats are great to have around because they gobble up lots of pesky insects. For bat box plans, a bat brochure, and more, send $1.00 to Bat Conservation International; c/o Pat Morton; P.O. Box 162603; Austin, TX 78716.

▶ Build a rock pile for small mammals and reptiles to hide in. It should be at least 4 feet (1 m) wide and 2½ feet (50 cm) high.

▶ Construct brush piles by stacking fallen or pruned branches or old Christmas trees. They make great hiding places for birds and other small animals.

▶ Have brush or old Christmas trees turned into wood chips, and have raked leaves shredded. (Call a plant nursery to find out who can do this for you.) Then use this material to cover the ground around plants. You can also use grass clippings, if they're free of pesticides, for a cover. These coverings help protect plant roots and hold moisture.

▶ Turn your yard, school grounds, or other space into a "Backyard Wildlife Habitat." Write to Dept. FB, NWF, for a brochure with lots of helpful suggestions, a list of great books to help you get started, and an application to have your yard certified as an official Backyard Wildlife Habitat when you're finished.

YOU CAN DO IT!

4 SAVING A PLACE FOR WILDLIFE

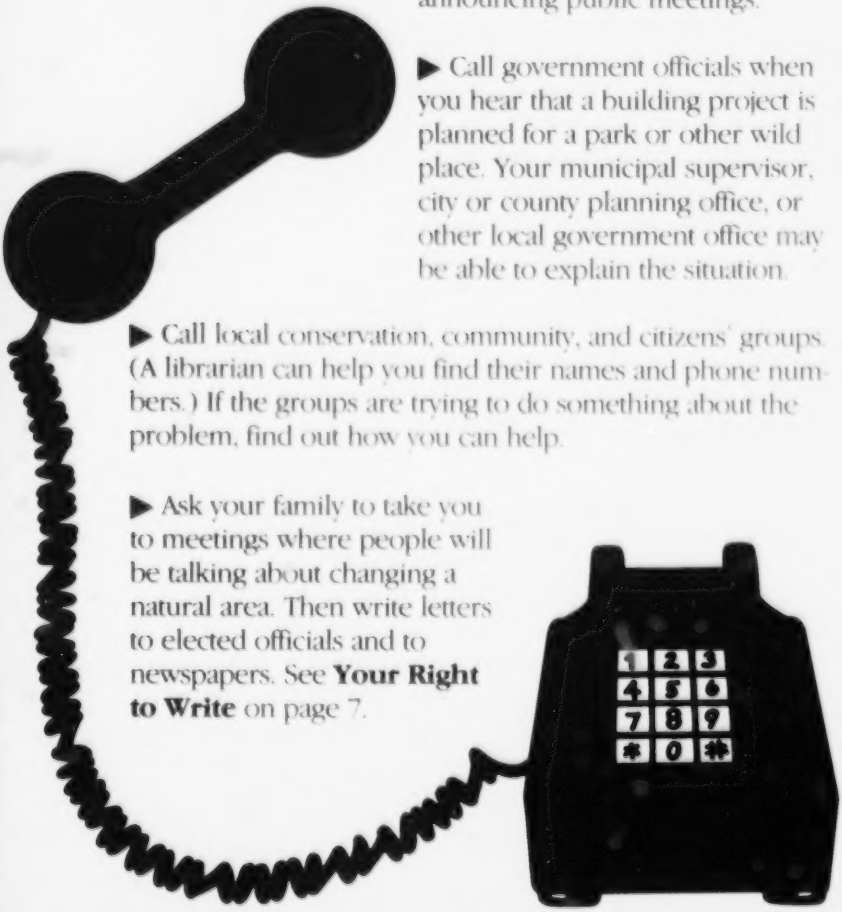
If you are worried that a natural area near your home might be destroyed, you can take some steps to try to protect that wild place and its wildlife:

▶ Know what's happening in your area. Read newspapers and listen to the radio to stay informed. Also, look for signs announcing public meetings.

▶ Call government officials when you hear that a building project is planned for a park or other wild place. Your municipal supervisor, city or county planning office, or other local government office may be able to explain the situation.

▶ Call local conservation, community, and citizens' groups. (A librarian can help you find their names and phone numbers.) If the groups are trying to do something about the problem, find out how you can help.

▶ Ask your family to take you to meetings where people will be talking about changing a natural area. Then write letters to elected officials and to newspapers. See **Your Right to Write** on page 7.



▶ Look for unused railroad tracks near your home. (But *don't* go near them. They can be dangerous!) When tracks are abandoned, the land is sold sometimes to developers. But the tracks can also be converted into trails for biking, walking, or just enjoying nature. And the land alongside the trail makes a great home for wildlife. See *Ranger Rick*, March 1987, pages 14—16, for a story on changing rails to trails. Also, write to "Rails-to-Trails," Dept. FB, NWF, for information about this project.

▶ Don't get discouraged. Even with lots of hard work, you may not be able to save a natural area. But you may be able to help more than you'd think. You'll never know unless you try! Read **Holleman Halts Bulldozers,** at right, about one kid who made a big difference.

Holleman Halts Bulldozers

Andrew Holleman, a seventh grader from Massachusetts, won an award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for his hard work in saving wildlife habitat near his home. Here's what happened:

A developer had planned to build condominiums in the woods, swamps, and fields where Andrew spends much of his free time. Andrew knew that rare reptiles lived on this land. And he knew this project would destroy all animal homes and possibly pollute a nearby stream, pond, and marsh.

After reading about the plans in the newspaper, Andrew asked the local Audubon group for suggestions on how to fight the project. Andrew wasn't sure he could make much of a difference, but he went to work anyway. He collected signatures from neighbors for a petition, started a letter-writing campaign, contacted area newspapers, spoke on local radio, and attended public meetings.

Andrew's hard work *worked!* The developer cancelled the plans, and Andrew was given an award for all his efforts. Animal homes were saved because one kid cared enough to fight for them.

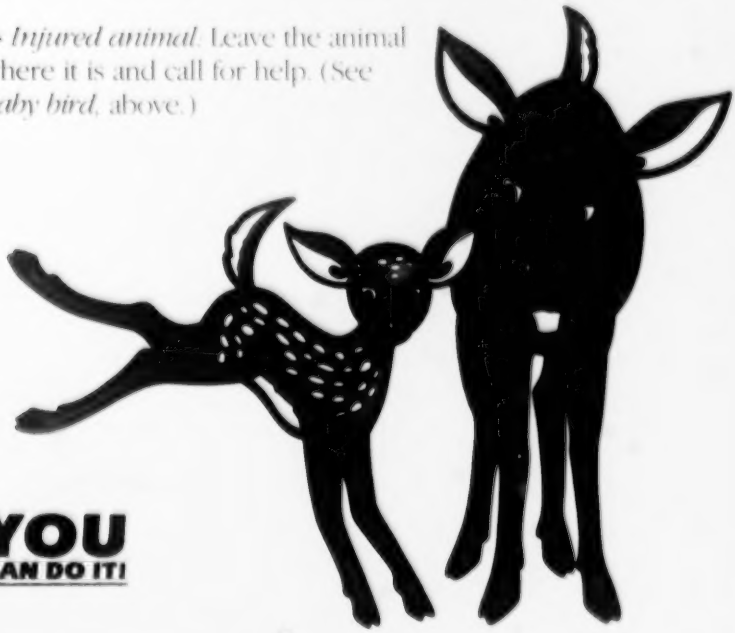
6 INJURED OR ABANDONED WILD ANIMALS

In most cases, you should *not* try to help a young or injured wild animal. Some mammals carry diseases that can make you sick. And any injured animal will be scared and may hurt you. But here are a couple of tips on what to do if you do find a wild animal in some kind of trouble:

▶ *Baby bird:* If you find a baby songbird such as a robin or sparrow, gently put it back in its nest. If you find any other kind of baby bird, call your local nature center, game warden, or animal shelter and ask for help finding a ***licensed wildlife rehabilitator***. Then call that person for help.

▶ *Baby mammal:* If you find a baby mammal, do *not* touch it. Its parents may be nearby, waiting for you to leave. If it is still alone after a few hours, it may be an orphan. Leave it where it is and call for help. (See *Baby bird*, above.)

▶ *Injured animal:* Leave the animal where it is and call for help. (See *Baby bird*, above.)



YOU CAN DO IT!

Your Right To Write

Caring is the first step to solving a problem. What's next? *Sharing* your feelings by writing a letter to people who can do something about the problem.

Whom you write to depends on what the problem is. You'll find suggestions throughout this handbook. You also may want to write your members of Congress, state legislators, and other government officials. And you can write to the local newspaper so other people can read about what's going on.

These tips will help you write a letter that people will want to read:

- Be polite.
- Write neatly.
- Explain exactly what you are worried about. For example, instead of saying you're worried about water pollution, say you're worried about the pollution in the river that runs through your city.
- Ask questions about what can be done, and ask for a reply to your letter.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Every year, more and more animals (and plants) are becoming *endangered*, or in danger of dying out. And more and more people are needed to help save them. Here are some things *you* can do:

▶ Write to your state wildlife office to find out what species in your area are rare or endangered and how you can help them.

▶ Check out books on endangered species to learn more about the problems they face.

▶ Write for information on endangered species from Dept. FB, NWF, and from places listed on page 16.

Cleaning Up The World

AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution is everywhere—even at the North Pole! And many of the causes of this pollution are right around home. For example, cars and most other motor vehicles burn fuel that spews pollutants into the air. Here are some ways you can help fight air pollution:

▶ Use cars less! Walk, ride a bike, or use public transportation such as buses and trains whenever you can.

▶ Remind your parents to keep their cars tuned up and to have pollution controls inspected.

▶ Also remind your parents (and any other drivers in the family) to use only *unleaded* gas in their cars. (*Leaded* gas pollutes the air more than unleaded gas, and it ruins a car's pollution controls.)

▶ Help build bike trails in your area. To find out about trail projects, call a local bicycling club or parks department.

▶ Don't burn leaves or trash . . . *recycle* them! See page 3 to find out how to use leaves in the garden. And see pages 12–13 to find out how to recycle trash.

▶ Plant trees and shrubs! Each plant, in its own small way, helps to clean the air.

▶ Use *Ranger Rick's Acid Rain Test Kit* to find out if acid rain might be a problem in your area and what to do about it. Order the kit for $3.00 from Dept. FB, NWF.

Electrical power often comes from burning oil, coal, or natural gas. Digging mines and drilling wells to find these fuels can damage wild places. And burning these fuels pollutes the air. So when you use these tips to save energy, you help save wild places *and* keep the air clean!

▶ Turn off lights, TV, etc., when you're not in the room.

▶ Know what you want before opening the refrigerator. It uses extra energy to stay cold when the door is open.

▶ If you have central heating and/or air conditioning, turn the thermostat down in the winter and up in the summer. Also, encourage your parents to replace or clean furnace air filters once a month.

▶ Help your parents fix drafty doors and windows.

▶ When your parents buy appliances, ask them to choose energy-saving models.

▶ Change light bulbs! You can buy *fluorescent* bulbs that are made to work in all kinds of lamps. They burn ten times longer than regular *incandescent* bulbs and use one-fourth the energy.

▶ Call your local gas or electric utility company for more energy-saving ideas. Ask if they inspect homes for energy-wasting problems.

10 WATER POLLUTION

If you think a nearby stream or waterway needs to be cleaned up, here's what you can do:

▶ Call your *state water pollution control agency*. They'll test the water for pollution and tell you what needs to be done to clean it up.

▶ Adopt a stream. The local fish and game officer can get you started with picking up litter, checking water quality, and doing other stream projects. The Izaak Walton League also sponsors a program for people who want to adopt a stream. The League's address is on page 16.

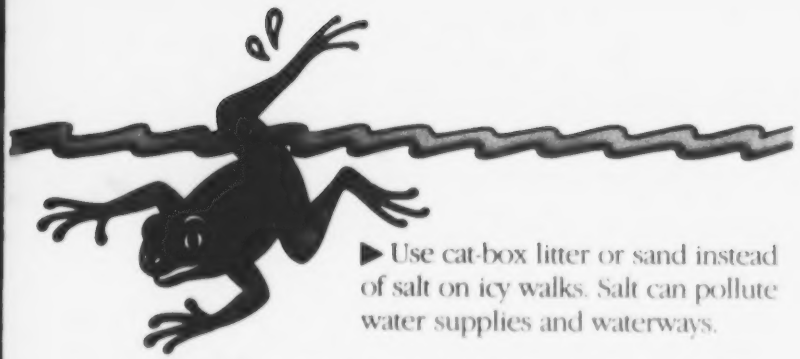
▶ Join a river or beach clean-up. A nature center can tell you if one is planned or how to organize one.

▶ Ask your family to use phosphate-free laundry detergent. Phosphates are chemicals that can cause water pollution.

▶ Encourage your family to use fewer pesticides and fertilizers in the garden and on the lawn. These chemicals often end up in underground water supplies and waterways.

▶ Ask your parents to avoid throwing leftover paint, cleaners, pesticides, or other chemicals into the trash. See page 13 to find out more.

▶ Discourage your parents from pouring used motor oil on the ground or down storm drains. A small amount of oil can pollute millions of gallons of water. See page 12 for what to do with used motor oil.



▶ Use cat-box litter or sand instead of salt on icy walks. Salt can pollute water supplies and waterways.

▶ If your family has a septic tank, ask your parents to have it inspected to make sure it is working properly. (One-third of the septic tanks in the U.S. are polluting water!)

▶ Test for acid rain. See **Air Pollution** on page 8.

SAVING WATER

Clean water isn't much good if we don't have enough of it for everyone to use. Here's how you can use less water:

▶ Take short showers instead of baths.

▶ Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.

▶ Help your parents fix leaky faucets and toilets.

▶ Run washing machines and dishwashers only when they are fully loaded.

▶ Talk to your parents about installing water-saving toilets, shower heads, and faucets.

▶ Use "gray water" (water that's already been used for baths and for washing dishes) to water plants.

▶ Collect the water that drips out of an air conditioner. Then use that water for plants in the garden.

12 TRASHY PROBLEMS

We make too much trash! *Landfills* are filling up and there's little room to build more. *Incinerators* can burn trash, but they pollute the air. To make all this worse, people throw poisons into the trash that pollute our land, water, and air. Here's how to help clean up:

▶ Call your local *solid waste office* to find nearby recycling centers for glass, aluminum, newspaper, and plastic. Then begin recycling those things.

▶ Earn money and help the environment too! Organize a bottle, can, and newspaper collection program as a fund raiser for your school group or any other group.

▶ Find out if your state has a *deposit law*. If you return empty bottles or cans to the store to be recycled, you get a little money back. If your state doesn't have a deposit law, call a local environmental group. Find out if anyone is working to have a law passed, and ask how you can help.

▶ Use things more than once. For example, you can decorate used containers and keep small items in them.

▶ Use products made to last, rather than products you throw away after using just a short time. For example, use *rechargeable batteries* instead of batteries that are no good after they run down.

▶ Encourage your parents to use grass clippings and leaves in the garden instead of throwing them away. See **Giving Habitat a Hand** on page 3.

▶ Ask your parents to recycle used motor oil. They can call the local solid waste office to find a collection center.

▶ Call your local solid waste office to find out if your area has a collection day for toxic household products. Many of these products, such as paint thinner or pesticides, can pollute the land and water if they are thrown into the trash. If your area has no collection day planned, find out how to get rid of toxic products safely. For a list of these products and more information, see "Adventures of Ranger Rick," *Ranger Rick,* April 1988, pages 36–41.

▶ Use paper products instead of plastic whenever you can. Plastic takes longer to break down in the environment than paper does. So ask for paper bags at the grocery store. And on picnics, use paper plates and cups instead of plastic ones. (Also, take your own silverware on picnics or other outings instead of using plastic knives, forks, and spoons.)

▶ If you are worried about a landfill or incinerator that's planned for your area, follow the suggestions under **Saving a Place for Wildlife** on pages 4–5.

Finding More Information

Listed on the next three pages are people, groups, and government offices that you can visit, call, or write for information. The first people you contact may be able to answer your questions. If not, ask them whom you should call or write next. Keep trying and you'll find someone to answer your questions or help with your problem.

▶ WILDLIFE OR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Public library: Reference librarians in public libraries can show you how to find someone in local or state governments to help with a problem or question. They also can help you find environmental groups that may be working on your problem. And if they can't find out exactly what you need, they can point you in the right direction. So, make friends with a librarian!

Nature center or science museum: People who work in these places already know a lot about your local environment and animals. Ask them for help and ideas!

National Wildlife Federation
8925 Leesburg Pike
Vienna, VA 22184-0001

In addition to the materials and brochures we describe in this handbook, the National Wildlife Federation has these helpful resources:

- the *Conservation Directory*, which lists government and private groups that help wildlife and the environment. Many libraries carry this directory.
- magazines with articles about nature and the environment (for kids, *Your Big Backyard* and *Ranger Rick*; for adults, *National Wildlife* and *International Wildlife*)

• *NatureScope*, an award-winning science activity series for adults to use with kids. For more information, teachers and parents may write to Dept. FB, NWF.

• *state affiliates*, who work on local and state problems. For the address of your NWF state affiliate, look in the *Conservation Directory*.

• an *Activist Kit*, which has tips for people who want to get more involved. For a brochure about this kit, write to Dept. FB, NWF.

▶ LOCAL AND STATE WILDLIFE PROBLEMS

Game wardens, wildlife officers, animal control officers. Whatever they're called in your area, these people can answer your questions about wildlife and habitat. Their phone numbers should be listed in the telephone directory under local government offices.

State offices of conservation, fish and game, or wildlife. People in these offices can give you information about wildlife in your state. A librarian can help you find the phone numbers or addresses.

National Audubon Society
Chapter Services
950 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10022
(Ask if there is a local Audubon group near you.)

YOU CAN DO IT!

▶ ENDANGERED SPECIES

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Public Affairs
18th and C Sts. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Sierra Club
Public Information Office
730 Polk St.
San Francisco, CA 94109

World Wildlife Fund
1250 24th St. NW
Washington, DC 20037
(They also have information about tropical rain forests.)

▶ POLLUTION

Local and state offices of water pollution control, solid waste, or environmental quality: People in these offices can help you with pollution problems. A librarian can help you find their addresses.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Public Information Center
PM 211B
401 M St. SW
Washington, DC 20460

Izaak Walton League
Save Our Streams Program
1401 Wilson Blvd.
Level B
Arlington, VA 22209

National Audubon Society
address on page 15
(Ask if there is a local Audubon group near you.)

Sierra Club
address above
(Ask if there is a local Sierra group near you.)

▶ SAVING ENERGY

U.S. National Energy Information Center
EI-231
Energy Information Administration
Forrestal Building
Room 1F-048
Washington, DC 20585

Environmental Policy Institute
218 D St. SE
Washington, DC 20003

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